

Applicant : Timothy P. Coffield et al
Serial No. : 09/769,967
Page No. : 2

-1- (Currently Amended)

A method for attaching a load bearing fabric to a support structure, comprising the steps of:

producing an ~~outer~~ first ring;

attaching a segment of load bearing fabric to the ~~outer~~ first ring;

producing an ~~inner~~ second ring adapted to receive interfit with the ~~outer~~ first ring;

interfitting the ~~inner~~ first ring and the ~~outer~~ second ring, at least one of the ~~inner~~ first ring and the ~~outer~~ second ring including a stretching means for stretching the fabric as a result of said interfitting; and

securing the ~~inner~~ first ring and the ~~outer~~ second ring in interfitted relation to maintain the fabric in a stretched configuration.

-2- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 1 wherein the ~~outer~~ first ring includes a fabric leg ~~74~~ extending in a direction substantially perpendicular to the fabric, said attaching step including attaching the fabric to the fabric leg ~~74~~ at a location selected to control the amount of stretch in the fabric.

Applicant : Timothy P. Coffield et al
Serial No. : 09/769,967
Page No. : 3

-3- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 2 wherein the ~~inner~~ second ring is adapted to receive the fabric leg 74, the ~~inner~~ second ring configured such that said interfitting step forces a portion of the fabric to extend in a direction substantially perpendicular to the remainder of the fabric, wherein the fabric is stretched to a desired tension as a result of said interfitting step.

-4- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 3 wherein the ~~inner~~ second ring includes a channel adapted to receive the fabric leg 74, said interfitting step including inserting the fabric leg 74 into the channel, wherein insertion of the fabric leg 74 into the channel ~~forces~~ engages a portion of the fabric down into the channel in a direction substantially perpendicular to the remainder of the fabric.

-5- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 4 wherein said attaching step includes selectively varying the attachment location of the fabric to the fabric leg 74 through different regions of the ~~outer~~ first ring, whereby the degree of stretch of the fabric resulting from said interfitting step selectively varies in different directions.

-6- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 5 wherein said attaching step includes the steps of:

placing the fabric in a mold in a relaxed state; and

Applicant : Timothy P. Coffield et al
Serial No. : 09/769,967
Page No. : 4

molding the ~~outer~~ first ring in situ about the fabric, whereby the ~~outer~~ first ring and the fabric become an integral combination.

-7- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 6 at least one of the ~~inner~~ first ring and ~~outer~~ second ring includes integral locking tabs, said securing step including inserting the ~~outer~~ first ring into the ~~inner~~ second ring until the locking tabs interlock the ~~inner~~ second ring and the ~~outer~~ first ring.

-8- (Currently Amended)

A method for securing a load bearing fabric to a support structure, comprising the steps of:

providing a first ring defining a central opening and carrying a load bearing fabric extending inwardly over the opening the first ring;

providing a second ring adapted to interfit with the inner ring;

interfitting the first ring and the second ring by relative movement of the first ring and the second ring ~~in a direction substantially perpendicular to the fabric~~, relative movement of the first ring and the second ring causing a portion of the fabric to extend ~~in the direction substantially perpendicular~~ at an angle to the remainder of the fabric, whereby the fabric is stretched to a desired tension upon said interfitting step; and

securing the first ring and the second ring together after said interfitting step to maintain the fabric at the desired tension.

Applicant : Timothy P. Coffield et al
Serial No. : 09/769,967
Page No. : 5

-9- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 8 wherein the first ring includes a fabric leg 74 extending in the direction substantially perpendicular to the fabric, the fabric being secured to the first ring along the fabric leg 74.

-10- (Original)

The method of claim 9 wherein the second ring includes a portion extending in the direction substantially perpendicular to the fabric and being configured to fit within the opening defined by the first ring, said interfitting step including the step of inserting the portion of the second ring into the opening defined by the second ring, whereby the portion of the second ring engages the fabric and forces a portion of the fabric to extend in a direction substantially perpendicular to the remainder of the fabric.

-11- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 10 wherein the second ring defines a channel adapted to receive the fabric leg 74 of the first ring, said interfitting step including the step of inserting the fabric leg 74 into the channel.

-12- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 11 wherein a location at which the fabric is attached to the fabric leg 74 varies through different regions of the outer ring, whereby the degree of stretch of the fabric resulting from said interfitting step selectively varies in different directions.

Applicant : Timothy P. Coffield et al
Serial No. : 09/769,967
Page No. : 6

-13- (Currently Amended)

The method of claim 12 wherein the first ring includes a trim leg extending outwardly from the fabric leg 74.

-14- (Original)

The method of claim 12 wherein at least one of the first ring and the second ring includes integral locking tabs, said securing step including inserting the outer ring into the inner ring until the locking tabs interlock the first ring and the second ring.

-15- (Original)

The method of claim 14 wherein the fabric is secured to the first ring by the step of molding the first ring in place about a peripheral portion of the fabric, whereby the fabric is encapsulated in the first ring.

Claims 16-32. (Canceled)